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## A Tender Conscience

[Original.]

Eva and I had been treading the pleasant road of newly engaged people a week when we encountered our first stumbling block. I called Wednesday and Saturday evenings—to arrive not before 8, to leave not after 11. I invariably arrived as the clock struck the hour of meeting and departed—well, I stayed as long after 11 as I dared. On the seventh day after our engagement I was on time and was ushered into the green drawing room, which, it had been stipulated, should be reserved for our exclusive use. Eva advanced as usual to meet me, and I was proceeding to greet her with the usual kiss when she stopped me.

My heart sank. I had had a hard struggle to get her away from a rival, and it occurred to me that she had, after all, discovered she loved him and didn't love me. However, I withheld any expression of trepidation and sank on to the sofa where I usually sat. But tonight instead of sitting so close to Eva that a sheet of paper could not be thrust between us I sat on one end of the sofa, while Eva sat on the other. It was plain by her expression that something of importance weighed on her mind. I dreaded to hear her speak the word that should undo all that had been so delightfully done. She had taken me up into the "delectable mountains," and now she was about to cast me into a "bottomless pit."

"Harry," she began, "something has been on my mind ever since we've been engaged."

"What is it?" I faltered.

"You know I've always said I wouldn't marry any but a perfectly pure man."

"I know it. I see it all. You're going to break our engagement because I'm not good enough."

"Don't go so fast. Often when you have kissed me I have wondered if you have ever kissed any one else. I've thought that it would be better to ask you and get the matter off my mind."

"But supposing I have."

"Supposing you have—well, supposing you have." A touch of feminine curiosity came into her eyes and voice. "In that case it would depend upon whom you have kissed."

"I never kiss and tell."

"It's not telling; it's confessing."

"But what right would I have to tell

that I had kissed a girl?"

"You have only the right to tell me. No one else, of course."

"Do you think the girl who has been kissed would assent to that?"

"She has nothing to do with the matter."

"Humph!"

This to me was a reductio ad absurdum, but to Eva a valid argument on her side. Our relations were becoming strained.

"Do you remember the autumn we all went nutting?" Eva asked.

"Perfectly."

"And how you and Daisy Langdon wandered away and sat under the bridge?"

"Did we?"

"Of course you did. You remember it well enough. You put your arm around her waist and kissed her."

"How did you know all this?"

"I happened to be walking toward the bridge and saw you."

There was a pause, during which we sat studying on the important problem that had come up between us.

"Well," I said at last, "since you won't marry a man impure enough to kiss a pure girl I don't see but that—" "I'm not immaculate," she said, hanging her head.

"Then why do you expect an immaculate lover?"

"I have long had a confession on my mind."

"Make it."

"At that same nutting party"—

"Well?"

"At the moment I came upon you and Daisy"—

"Well?"

"I was walking with—with a friend."

"You're sure he wasn't a lover?"

"A friend who might or might not be a lover. When we saw you go away from under the bridge we went there ourselves and sat down. Then he kissed me."

All this came hard, but it all came at last, and I felt that I was safe from further molestation as to my own peccadillos. I was a trifle irritated at having had to go through so much for so little and, rising, said coldly:

"So I suppose your knowledge—a knowledge you have had for more than a year—that I am not perfectly pure ends all between us."

"I have confessed to an equal sin. If you will forgive me, I will forgive you."

"Oh, I see it all now. Having a sin on your conscience, you first bring up an equal one on my part."

"I think you are very unkind."

"There is one thing I don't like about this matter, one thing in which you

have had the advantage of me. You know the girl I kissed; I don't know the man who kissed you."

"Is it necessary that I should confess that? No one expects anything of a man."

"But you have expected something of me."

Eva patted her foot on the carpet. "I only intended to confess my part in the matter," she said.

"It has not been necessary that you should confess anything. You did it to ease your conscience, not at any request from me."

Here occurred the only effective argument in this mild blow on a mill pond, a tear that I saw glistening in Eva's eye. The episode was closed.

"That night I overstay my limit an hour."

F. A. MITCHELL.

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### Lonesome Jack and a Snake Killing.

A few days ago Ed Peeples, jr., was out hunting, not far from his father's house and found a large rattle-snake. The young lad first discovered the snake by its raising its head. He shot the snake and killed it and did not know it. But it had a mate and made fight at him and started towards him. This frightened the boy and he returned to the house for reinforcement. The writer and the boy's father joined him and returned in search of the snakes.

But after returning we could not find the exact place. After a diligent search we found them again by one raising its head. After killing it, the writer armed himself with a good light-wood limb and began searching and soon found the third of the snakes. After we had killed this one we were looking at the first we shot after returning, and found two, one being already dead, we supposed to be the one the boy killed when he shot the first time.

There being three grown snakes we began looking around and found that it was a rendezvous where they had come to raise their young. We found sixteen wee snakes and thinking we had killed them, we departed.

The next day we went back and found the young snakes still alive and ready to do the deadly work they were created to do. But we immediately put an end to their lives. There were nineteen snakes in all, and Lonesome Jack must say that it was the biggest snake killing he ever participated in, and the most dead snakes he ever saw. We left the place where these snakes were killed almost afraid to step, but returned safely to the house. Each promised to be more careful hereafter while traveling in the rough woods.

Lonesome Jack.

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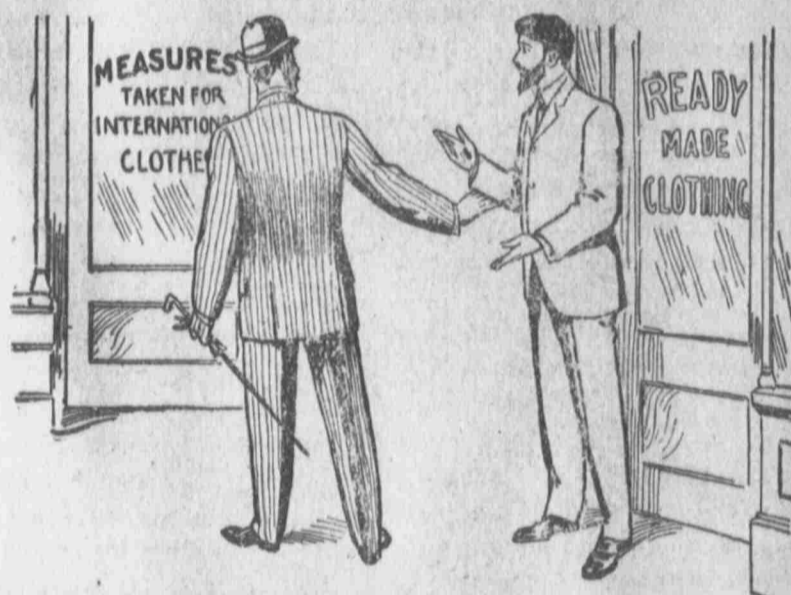
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